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ABSTRACT

This report contains the National Urban League's statistics on the state of black America. The areas addressed are: the economy, employment, housing, health, education, legislation, crime, and social welfare. By any of the accepted indicators of progress-employment, housing, education, etc.--many of the gains blacks made over the past decade were either wiped out or badly eroded in 1975, and the portents for the future are not encouraging. The report is replete with facts that support the league's contention that 1975 was most destructive to black progress. In addition to the moral failures underscored, the report reveals unwholesome social policy trends. Basically, the Nation'sunwillingness to face up to the seriousness of the problems that years of racism have created, and the unwillingness to deal with those problems with the intensity and commitment their solution demands is emphasized. The report concludes with a number of recommendations that the American people should seriously consider in addressing the problems that are cited. (Author/AM)

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The State of Black America 1976

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Distress Signal

The report on the state of black America released last week by the National Urban League is a profoundly depressing document. Beyond the statistics it contains—gloomy enough by themselves—the report dramatizes a substantial failure of political leadership.

Vernon Jordan Jr., the league's executive director, noted that the State of the Union Message by President Ford omitted all mention of the plight of black Americans while Senator Edmund S. Muskie in his reply on behalf of the Democrats, omitted the promise of racial equality from his list of endangered American promises.

The report is replete with facts backing up the league's conclusion that no recent year "has been more destructive to the progress of blacks than 1975." Among them are:

● After narrowing the income gap during the economic surge of the nineteen sixties, black median family income fell back in 1974 to only 58 per cent of white family income.

● When account was taken of discouraged workers and workers holding part-time jobs as well as people looking for jobs they could not find, more than one-quarter of the black work force was unemployed throughout 1975. By the same standard, the league found that "over half" of all black workers in many poverty areas were unemployed during the past year, while over two-thirds of the teen-agers could not find jobs."

● The number of black families with two breadwinners—the principal factor supporting many of the hopeful analyses of black advances made earlier in this decade—has declined significantly during the current recession.

● Disparities in health remained great: White women have a life expectancy 5.4 years longer than black women; the corresponding gap for men is a full six years. The death rate related to childbirth and pregnancy is four times greater for blacks than for whites.

The list is longer, but the message is clear. In aspects of life that can be measured statistically, the gains made in the sixties by America's largest minority group have been decimated. And in intangible terms—those relating to the demands for equality urged on the nation's conscience by its leaders—all gears have been thrown into reverse.

In addition to the moral failures this report underscores—which by themselves are highly significant—it dramatizes unwholesome and even frightening social policy trends. Such severe distress in any single segment of society is bound to have large consequences throughout all of American life. Nothing demonstrates this quite so well as the current precarious financial plight of so many of the nation's cities.

In the end, then, the conditions described by the Urban League constitute a substantial challenge to the country's political leadership, not simply to redeem a central aspect of American idealism, but to reverse a dangerous disintegration in the social fabric of the entire nation.

Statement by
VERNON E. JORDAN, Jr.
Executive Director
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE
at
"THE STATE of BLACK AMERICA" Press Conference
Washington, D. C.
WEDNESDAY, January 28, 1976

Last week the President declared that the State of the Union "is better, in many ways a lot better." I am here today to say that the state of black Americans is worse, in many ways a lot worse, as a direct consequence of the social and economic policies followed by recent Republican administrations and Democratic Congresses.

The slow but steady decline in racial cooperation and in the black condition became, in 1975, a headlong rush into the deep pit of Depression and hardship. The condition of black Americans, once the benchmark of America's commitment to equality and justice, is now the object of malign neglect and hostile disregard.

That neglect is manifest in the President's State of the Union address, which did not include a single mention of black citizens and their needs. It included not one word about the government's commitment to enforce the civil rights laws, about the disproportionate sufferings black people have endured in the current Depression, about mob attempts to defy court orders to desegregate the schools, about the impact of urban fiscal problems on our most urbanized minority --not one word!

Nor did Senator Muskie's reply to the President include even a single reference to the hopes and aspirations of black people. His long catalogue of promises that are in danger of being broken fails to mention our nation's single most important promise -- the promise of racial equality. We have travelled a long way since a President stood in the well of Congress and proclaimed "We Shall Overcome," and it's all been in the wrong direction.

If the President's Budget is any indication, 1976 will be even worse than 1975 for black people. Boiled down to its essentials, the Budget means intolerable high unemployment and drastic cuts in desperately needed domestic programs to finance the swollen appetite of the Pentagon. Coupled with similar belt-tightening in many state and local governments' budgets, the nation appears to have embarked on a "new realism" that substitutes callousness for compassion and parsimony for progress.

Because the public has been subjected to an analysis of the State of the Union that excludes black people, the National Urban League has prepared a document that delineates the State of Black Americans today. It is a document that does not attempt to cover up the seriousness of the situation black people find themselves in. In this Bicentennial year, it is a sad commentary upon a nation celebrating a revolution fought on the proposition that "all men are created equal."

Last year at this time the media were busy announcing that blacks were now solidly entrenched in the middle class. Today, the Urban League reports that middle income black families have declined from a fourth of all black families to a fifth, while those in poverty have increased. The income gap between whites and blacks has widened to the point where it was a decade ago, reflecting the rollback in black economic gains.

In 1975, every fourth black worker was unemployed, and the majority of them were ineligible for unemployment compensation. Federal programs in employment, in public service jobs, in training, in food stamps, in housing, in welfare, in many important areas, simply did not reach the eligible black population in equitable proportions.

All across the board black people lost out in 1975. We believe that the social fabric of our nation is too tenuous to withstand continuation of the policies that brought us to the brink of survival in the last twelve months. We believe in a "new realism" that brings solutions to our country's problems, rather than one that worsens those problems.

The National Urban League's State of Black America document makes important recommendations that spell out some of the solutions -- a full employment policy that assures decent jobs for all; an income maintenance system that alleviates economic hardship and replaces the

welfare mess; housing, health and education programs that go beyond rhetoric to bring our nation closer to a prosperity that includes all of its citizens.

It is our hope that this document will pierce the dark veil of neglect that has thus far smothered efforts to right the wrongs of the past and present. It is presented as an alternative to failed public policies.

I hope that it will be read closely in the White House and in the Congress and that it may influence decision-makers to open their eyes to the plight of black Americans. I hope it will be read by all of the candidates in both parties, whose campaigns thus far largely exhibit a refusal to grapple with real issues and with the concerns of black citizens. And I hope it will be read closely by the press and the electronic media, whose neglect of black interests and black concerns in 1975 was as pervasive as Washington's.

And I know it will be read by black Americans, in order that they may document their grievances and understand the terrible dilemma they face. I urge black people, whose condition has so drastically worsened and whose very survival is at stake, to educate themselves to the issues, to register, and to vote in the coming primaries and election. For this Bicentennial election of 1976 could be the most crucial election in recent history for black people. The implications of the mass impoverishment of blacks and the massive assault on our newly-won rights demands that every black vote be mobilized in defense of black interests and aspirations.

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THE STATE OF BLACK AMERICA

Issued By The National Urban League

As the nation enters its Bicentennial Year, Black America is in a state of crisis. By any of the accepted indicators of progress -- employment, housing, education, etc. -- many of the gains blacks made over the past decade were either wiped out or badly eroded in 1975, and the portents for the future are not encouraging.

True, on a limited and individual basis there were exceptions to this downward trend in 1975, but the growing number of blacks without jobs, the increasing gap between white and black income, new public displays of racism and the negative attitude of policy-makers toward programs that aid the poor, marked the year as one of increasing hardships for Black America.

Without question, much of the responsibility for many of the reverses sustained by blacks lay with the economy. Blacks suffered disproportionately because of their low position on the economic ladder as unemployment climbed to depression levels in many of their communities and inflation cut into their already limited purchasing power.

But this is only part of the story of what happened to Black America in 1975. The other has to do with the rapidly drying up of the nation's willingness to face up to the seriousness of the problems that years of racism have created, and to deal with those problems with the intensity and commitment their solution demands.

It also has to do with the failure of those in leadership roles to create the type of moral climate in which Americans could understand the true nature of the

problems that afflict blacks and the poor, and how this nation has an overriding obligation to address itself to these problems, instead of ignoring them.

There were no riots in 1975 to call America's attention to the massive discontent in many of her cities, and perhaps this helped lull her people into a false sense of complacency. But underneath the apparently placid surface ran deep tides of cynicism and bitterness, and faith in the ability of the nation to make the system work for the poor, or even in its willingness to try, reached a low point among blacks.

It could hardly have been otherwise. There were abundant signs of growing indifference and even hostility to the legitimate aspirations of blacks. At the national level there was mounting pressure on the part of the Administration to cut social services to the poor and to discredit programs that served them. An example of this was the controversy over food stamps and the launching of a campaign against them spearheaded by the Secretary of the Treasury who condemned recipients as "chiselers."

With violence breaking out in Boston and Louisville in 1975 over the implementation of court ordered desegregation the President himself gave encouragement to the mobs by criticizing the courts and expressing opposition to busing. Lost in the emotional furor was the basic Constitutional issue of the right of black children to an integrated education.

For its part, Congress, purportedly the most liberal in years, failed to develop new policies which would address themselves to the basic problems that beset blacks and the poor, and failed to serve as a counter-balance to the Administration's policies.

The revelations of how the late J. Edgar Hoover used the FBI to harass civil rights groups and their leaders, most notably the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,

demonstrated to blacks the precarious status of their civil rights and further eroded their confidence in the impartiality of law enforcement agencies.

In the area of foreign policy and in the light of America's traditional disinterest in the darker nations of Africa, there was a keen sense of disapointment among blacks over the Administration's decision to become involved in the Angolan Civil War on the side of racist South Africa.

There was a growing feeling within the black community of isolation from the total society, induced in part by the above described coldness of government, and in part by the stresses that appeared in relationships with some old allies over such matters as quotas and seniority versus affirmative action. While the differences were not fatal to these relationships, they served to reinforce the feeling that there are issues affecting blacks which may find them on one side and their old friends on another.

And finally, the ugly outbreaks of racial violence in Boston -- long regarded, if incorrectly, as the fountainhead of liberalism in this country -- served notice that racism has no geographical limits and continues to exist in the American body politic.

As this paper will show, there was no escaping in 1975 the fact that the Second Reconstruction had indeed come to an end, and it, like the First Reconstruction that followed the Civil War, was uncompleted.

THE ECONOMY

Inflation slowed in 1975 but the year saw a further decline in middle income families, continuing a trend that between 1973-74 saw these families decrease from one-fourth of the total of black families to one-fifth.

In 1974 (the last full year for which income statistics are available) the median income for black families was $7,808, while the median income for white families was $13,356. Thus black family income was only 58 percent of white family income. This is the same ratio that existed in 1966 and represented a drop from 61 percent in 1969.

Even during 1974, before the full impact of the 1974-75 depression was felt, the number of poor people increased by 1.3 million (including 139,000 blacks, to 24.3 million, the greatest growth since the government began recording poverty statistics in 1959.

Moreover, the actual extent of poverty in America is much greater than governmental figures indicate. Although 24 million persons are classified as poor, according to official poverty statistics, a more realistic definition of poverty that sets a higher income figure than the government, reveals that about twice as many persons (over 40 million) are in fact poor and in dire need today, as a result of the cumulative effects of inflation and recession/depression.

More important, however, it is a fact that blacks have been in a state of chronic recession for the past 20 years. Over the past two decades, this country has had at least five recessions: 1953-54, 1957-58, 1960-61, 1969-71 and 1974-75. Before blacks had a chance to recover from one recession they were subjected to another. While white unemployment has only recently began to go over 6 percent, black unemployment has not been under 6 percent at any time during the past two decades.

The work experience of all black wage earners has steadily declined. Families headed by black women are getting poorer, despite the fact that most are in the

work force. Two-parent black families -- the keystone of the black middle class -- also experienced severe declines in their standard of living because of reduced job opportunities for working wives, as well as disproportionate layoffs of married black men due to the 1974-75 depression.

EMPLOYMENT

The most realistic manner of reporting what took place with the black worker during 1975 is to describe the general situation for blacks as worse than at any time since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

During the third quarter of 1975 black unemployment rose by 14,000 to a record high of 3,075,000, taking into account those workers who had become discouraged and dropped out of the labor market and those workers holding part-time jobs because they could not find full-time jobs. Over the year, this unofficial but more accurate black jobless rate remained at an almost constant 26 percent. Thus, from the beginning of the year, one out of every four black worker in the nation was unemployed.

Even when the "official" measurement of the Department of Labor is used (this excludes the two categories used in the unofficial tabulation) black unemployment remained virtually unchanged at 14.1 percent for the first three quarters of 1975, while white unemployment dropped from 8.0 percent to 7.6 percent.

Using the unofficial rates, over half of all black workers in many poverty areas were unemployed during the past year, while over two-thirds of the teenagers could not find jobs.

Further aggravating the employment situation was the ineligibility of over half of all the black unemployed for unemployment compensation.

Complicating the employment picture for blacks is the factor of long-term unemployment. Among unemployed black males, 26 percent of them were out of work half-a-year or more, followed by 16 percent of the adult women, 10 percent of the male teenagers, and 5 percent of the female teenagers.

These figures mean that those who have been out of work the longest are remaining out of work.

A major issue that emerged full blown during the year was that of seniority as opposed to affirmative action. With lay-offs occurring in industry because of the economic downturn, the question arose as to how these lay-offs would affect the minority worker since in many instances he was the last hired and under the strict observance of seniority would be the first to go. This meant that in some instances blacks who had been victims of past discrimination were unfairly penalized.

Blacks also found themselves losing ground in other employment areas. The National Urban League completed a survey of prime sponsor hiring practices under Title II and Title VI of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) that showed there has been a shifting of emphasis from helping people most in need of jobs to helping those recently unemployed and with higher educational levels.

Additionally, a Department of Labor report indicates there has been a substantial drop in manpower training funds available to the nation's inner-cities where unemployment is highest, with more of these funds going to suburban and rural areas. Here again is an example of the minority poor being made even poorer as funds are diverted to other areas.

Despite claims that the recession has bottomed out and the worse is behind us, unemployment is still rampant in the nation and even the most optimistic forecast projects a continuing official unemployment rate of over 7 percent. For blacks this automatically means an official unemployment rate of 14 percent, and the unofficial rate will be even higher.

To assume that the nation can live with so many people unable to find jobs and forming a permanent cadre of the helpless and hopeless, is dangerous. What is being created by this situation is social dynamite that will not be defused by retreat to the position that the government cannot create enough jobs to provide work for all her citizens.

Indeed, the government cannot afford not to create these jobs through incentives to the private sector as well as public work projects and public service employment jobs. The nation can do nothing less than create a full employment policy that will provide a decent job for everyone willing to work.

HOUSING

The homebuilding industry suffered a second year of continuing disaster during 1975. The 1,161,500 units of housing started in 1975 was the lowest number in 30 years and far below the 2.6 million units established as a goal by Congress in 1969.

Prolonged construction downturns, such as endured during 1975, create conditions under which discrimination deprives large numbers of black households of opportunities to improve their housing conditions even if their incomes are maintained or improved during the period.

As one consequence, the National Urban League has concluded that the gains in

homeownership registered by blacks during the 1960's (from 38 percent to 42 percent of black households) have been eliminated by the recession continuing in 1975.

Under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, in full effect for the first time in 1975, the Administration promised to deliver 400,000 units of the new housing subsidy program by mid-1976. At year's end 1975, however, only about 25 percent of this figure had been committed. With incompletion rates in the untested program likely to be high and with evidence that financial commitments are about exhausted for the new program, it is highly unlikely that the Administration will meet its goal.

The impact on blacks of the Community Development Block Grant Program which replaces the old urban programs such as Urban Renewal and Model Cities is even more problematic.

In a study of this program the National Urban League concluded that no more than 50 percent of first-year grants under this program are likely to provide benefits for lower income persons as specified in the Act. Actually, fully one-third of the grants are likely to be used for purposes counter to the welfare of lower income people such as redevelopment of land occupied by lower income persons for reuse by higher income residents.

The persistence of housing discrimination and the continued lack of adequate fair housing law enforcement was documented in 1975 by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in a report -- "Twenty Years After Brown: Equal Opportunity in Housing" -- that cited abandonment of federal goals for low-and-moderate income housing as a contributing factor to the persistence of racial and sexual discrimination as "fundamental operating principles" of the housing market in the

United States. The report also charged the Federal government with a "piecemeal approach" to fair housing law enforcement.

The only significant positive event in housing for blacks that occurred in 1975 was the passage by Congress of the Mortgage Redlining Bill which requires all federally-regulated lending institutions to disclose the location of all mortgage secured loans.

The Bill was enacted largely as a result of data showing that minority applicants for mortgages were rejected much more than white applicants with the same economic characteristics.

HEALTH

The generally poor health picture in black communities was adversely impacted by the Depression of 1975. This conclusion is based on a number of reputable studies which demonstrate that the rate of unemployment, adverse changes in per capita income, and the annual rate of inflation have the most serious negative effects on levels of health.

Because in many instances the results of declining levels of health and well-being take several years to become apparent -- for example, increased infant mortality rates -- it is not possible at this time to accurately gauge what 1975 will cost blacks in these two areas. However, it can be assumed that the impact was negative and the results will continue to plague black people for years to come.

The dimensions of the black health problem became apparent with the examination of several sets of statistics.

- White women are expected to live to be 76.7 years old and black women 71.3 years. Black males have a life expectancy of 62.9 years as against the 68.9 average of white males.

- The infant mortality rate for nonwhites in the U.S. is nearly twice the rate of whites.

- The gap between black and white maternal death rates has increased in the last 30 years. Today at 63.6 black childbirth and pregnancy related deaths per 100,000, it is four times greater than the rate for white women.

- The urban ghetto usually has a paucity of medical facilities and manpower. Almost 24 million Americans, 12 percent of the population are black, but only 2 percent of the nation's physicians are black. About 2.6 percent of the dentists are black and 5.7 percent of the professional nurses.

EDUCATION

Rational national discussion about the quality of education available to blacks was clouded in 1975 by the inordinate amount of attention focused on busing, and the manner in which that issue was wrapped up in emotional and political trappings. Twenty years after the Brown decision of the Supreme Court, the Constitutional rights of black children to an integrated education were again under attack.

Lost from view in the heat of Boston and Louisville, the unfortunate and ill-timed statements of the President questioning court decisions, and in the efforts of politicians to cash in on what they saw as the growth of anti-busing sentiment was the more substantial issue of whether our schools are providing adequate educations to minorities and the poor.

By any test, the answer was no.

Not only were black children not being educated by the schools, a fact attested to by declining test scores, but they were also being thrown out of the institutions in disproportinate numbers for alleged infractions, the majority of which had nothing to do with offenses connected with school safety or protecting property.

Statistics collected by the Children's Defense Fund revealed that about two million school-age children, about half of them under the age of 13, are not enrolled in school. There is evidence that the figures are conservative and that the number is even higher than this, especially in some states and among black children.

The Federal government's attitude toward the education of disadvantaged children was reflected in the drop in appropriations for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which was designed to assist school systems and community groups to operate programs to reduce the effects of racial isolation.

The Federal government appropriated $215 million in 1975 for ESEA as compared to $236 million in 1974.

Furthermore, in 1975, because of the lack of funds, several school systems proposed quality programs which could not be funded.

A report prepared by the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education indicated that the gap between the number of black and white college graduates is widening. The report also emphasized the need for the education of more black professionals stating that blacks comprised only two percent of the nation's physicians, 2.5 dentists, 1.5 lawyers and 2.0 PhD. graduates.

LEGISLATION

The first session of the 94th (1975) Congress ended on a sour note for black and poor Americans. It was unable to enact any substantial legislation pertaining to socio-economic programs and policies that would foster full employment and the President's plan to hold down federal spending obviously had an overwhelming effect.

Despite the biggest Democratic majority in ten years, the only social legislation that was not compromised was the food stamp program when Congress beat back an attempt by the Administration to have recipients pay more money towards the cost of such stamps.

In 1975, the Congress sustained the President's veto of a Democratic-sponsored bill aimed at creating more than one million jobs in both the public and private sector and then settled for a much smaller version of the original bill. This action came as the national unemployment level was climbing to its May, 1975 high of 9.2 percent.

Congress also scaled down legislation to help the slumping housing industry at a time when the unemployment rate in the construction industry stood at almost 22 percent and new housing starts were at their lowest level in three decades.

On three occasions Congress did override Presidential vetoes of legislation important to blacks and the poor. One override renewed funding authority for health services and nurse training programs, the second amended and extended the school lunch and child nutrition programs, and the third passed the education appropriation.

After much filibustering in the Senate, Congress reaffirmed its guarantee of the right to vote for blacks and expanded that guarantee to include Spanish-speaking Americans when it extended the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to another seven years.

Rebuffing an Administration attempt to end special employment programs for older workers, Congress did pass legislation extending jobs, nutrition and other programs for the elderly and after one of the most heated legislative debates of the year, it approved federal loan assistance for financially ailing New York City.

Finally, a major Congressional turn-around on the issue of court ordered busing occurred when several northern senate Democrats, usually considered to be liberals on civil rights issues, joined ranks with opponents to support an anti-busing amendment.

CRIME

Despite the millions of dollars poured into local police departments by the Federal government; despite the thousands of new police hired, and despite the hue and cry for stiffer penalities for those convicted of criminal acts, the rate of crime continued to grow in 1975.

The majority of the victims were not whites, but blacks who were compelled by socio-economic forces to live in high crime areas. Blacks were four times as likely to be robbed as whites; twice as likely to be assaulted, and four times as likely to be raped. Of the nation's murder victims last year, 51 percent were black.

While blacks are over-represented as crime victims, they are under-represented in the criminal justice system. The city of Chicago is an example with a population that is 32.7 percent black, it has a police force that is only 16 percent black.

A survey by the Race Relations Information Center revealed that in 42 states out of a total of 41,894 state police personnel, only 616 or 1.5 percent are black.

In 1975 there were increasing efforts within black communities to deal with the matter of crime internally. Black media dealt more and more with "black on black" crime and the need for blacks themselves to combat it. In a number of areas imaginative community-run programs were undertaken that while meagerly funded, demonstrated that community involvement could be effective where other methods had failed.

Fresh attention was focused in 1975 on the prisons and what they do to people who are incarcerated there. While the black community supported strong measures to remove dangerous offenders from society, it also supported the constitutional and human rights of prison inmates and the need to rehabilitate offenders.

On the national level, in spite of evidence that juveniles who commit minor offenses could be better served if they were diverted from the juvenile court system and given adequate social services in their respective communities, the Administration dragged its feet in implementing the new Juvenile Justice Deliquency Prevention Act of 1974. This program is to fund experiments in diverting children away from court and confinement. However, the $1.5 billion original price tag was cut down to $350 million with only $25 million actually allocated.

The experiences over the past year made it clear that in addition to monies, part of the new directions that must be followed in solving the crime problem is

the broader participation of black and minority communities in the planning, development and implementation of crime prevention programs.

Special efforts must also be undertaken to empower minority groups to recruit among their members in order to increase the number of minorities serving on the law enforcement agencies throughout the country.

SOCIAL WELFARE

The Administration's "Benign Neglect" policy toward social welfare programs continued during 1975. Its approach toward social service programs was consistently restricted as demonstrated through the use of the Presidential Veto threat.

On five occasions the President used his veto power to kill social service legislation and on only two occasions -- the school lunch program and the health services and nurse training programs -- was the veto over-ridden.

Many attempts by the Administration to defer spending on social welfare programs were rejected by the Congress. On the other hand Congress was apprehensive about increasing spending on moving (or implementing) new initiatives.

At the very time that there was a growing need for increased spending on social welfare programs, induced in large measure by the severe economic dislocation sustained in black and poor communities, these services were being advocated at their present level.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare recently reported that the number of families on welfare increased in August, 1975, possibly setting a new record. Over 3.5 million families received assistance that month, representing

9.2 percent more than received assistance in August, 1974, and 8 percent more than in July, 1975.

The growing need for these services were exemplified by a number of situations affecting black people including the growing number of older people; pressures on mothers of small children to go to work thus increasing the need for day care; efforts to reduce the incidence of institutional care thus requiring a vast expansion of community services; continued migration, and the need to deal positively with behavior society defines as pathological, such as drug addiction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the context of the recent past, no year has been more destructive to the progress of blacks than 1975. Though it can be argued with complete justification that other Americans also sustained losses during the year, what has to be recognized is that blacks lost more and every loss represented a major setback from which it will take them years to recover.

America should not make the mistake of believing that because the problems of blacks and the poor did not have high visibility or command public attention in 1975 that they no longer exist, or have been ameliorated to such an extent they are no longer important.

The problems remain. They grew worse in 1975.

The implications of this should not be lost on the American people, for the future of this nation is bound up in how it deals with these problems. To be remembered is that other societies have disintegrated when they ignored signs of

spreading poverty and disenchantment among their people. It can happen in America but it does not have to. The hour is late but there is yet time to set the American house in order.

A proper beginning could be made in the Bicentennial Year -- an election year -- by a pledge by each of the Presidential candidates to discuss openly and honestly with the American people the critical issues that have been outlined in this report, and suggesting what remedial actions should be taken.

Eschewing political banalities, sloganeering and appeals to fears and suspicions, the candidates should seize the opportunity to challenge the nation to regain her sense of purpose by facing her imperfections, not apologetically, but with the firm resolve that this nation can and should do better.

The civil rights organizations and related groups can aid in this process of creating a national dialogue around these issues by coming together in a coalition for the express purpose of formulating and implementing a nationwide non-partisan voter registration and education campaign.

Such a campaign would not only seek to register the unregistered, but to encourage understanding and support of the political process.

This report concludes with a number of recommendations that the American people should seriously consider in addressing the problems that have been cited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THE ECONOMY

1. The present welfare system should be replaced with a national income maintenance program that would insure every American a liveable minimum income. The program would be accomplished through a universal refundable credit income tax that in its application would provide a basic annual grant or tax credit for all.
2. Existing tax loopholes should be closed and a tax system created that would be fairer than the present illusion of a progressive tax system that actually takes more from the pockets of moderate income working people than it does the rich.
3. Until such time as the tax system is overhauled, there should be direct tax relief to the lower wage earners in the form of an increase in the personal exemption or replacement of the exemption by a tax credit.

EMPLOYMENT

4. A federal program of public service employment that would create one million jobs in needed public services should be initiated immediately. The program should include training, a career mobility component and special efforts to

include young people and residents of high unemployment neighborhoods.

5. A full employment program that would guarantee every American a job who wants to work and is able to work, should be adopted as national policy. The policy would include incentives to private industry to hire and train workers, a modernized federal works program along the line of the old WPA, and a vastly expanded public service employment program that will improve our schools, hospitals, public safety, conservation and other essential public services.

HOUSING

6. Procedures should be instituted by the Department of Housing and Urban Development that would provide incentives for local initiatives in achieving the goal of a decent home and suitable living environment, and disincentives for the unworthy use of Federal resources.

7. The Department of Housing and Urban Development should require a commitment from individual localities that they will move to overcome housing discrimination, as a precondition to receiving both federal housing subsidy grants and federal middle and upper income housing benefits, such as mortgage insurances.

8. The construction of new housing units should be raised to the 2.5 million units annual standard set by Congress. There should be an expansion of the availability of housing for families earning below median incomes through active programs of rent allowances, neighborhood maintenance of rehabilitation projects, direct and indirect housing subsidies, construction of new housing units, and strict enforcement of federal civil rights law.

SOCIAL SERVICES

9. The growing trend toward the reduction of social services to the poor as an economy measure should be halted, cuts restored and funding increased to respond to growing needs.

HEALTH

10. It is imperative that the government develop a comprehensive national health service that is consumer-orientated, federally-supported, and assures dignified, quality health care for all Americans, regardless of race, economic circumstances, or geographical location.

EDUCATION

11. The President should clarify for the American people the constitutional requirements for integrated education and urge support for all court orders that seek to bring this about.

12. The federal government should undertake support for demonstration projects, for parental involvement, for measures that help to equalize local school district expenditures, for funds needed for compensatory education programs and for special programs serving pupils who need more educational resources.

13. There should be increased federal support for the black colleges, which grant two-thirds of the bachelor degrees earned by blacks.

CRIME

14. A strong federal gun control law should be enacted.

15. New federal initiatives to deal with the problems of crime should be undertaken, but these initiatives should emphasize new programs of citizen participation in crime prevention, reforms of the criminal justice system, neighborhood based probation programs, services to accused offenders.

The recommendations offered here are admittedly sweeping in nature, but the experiences of the past year argue persuasively for such massive action. The urgency of the problems that grip the American people allow no time for delay or for half-way measures.

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